

Cabinet Meeting

14 September 2016

Report title	Children and Young People's Participation Strategy	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Young People	
Key decision	No	
In forward plan	No	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Emma Bennett	
Originating service	Children and Young People	
Accountable employee(s)	Alice Vickers Tel Email	Corporate Parenting Officer 01902 553005 Alice.Vickers@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	People Leadership Team Strategic Executive Board Corporate Parenting Board	20 June 2016 28 June 2016 21 July 2016

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the three year Children and Young People's Participation Strategy
2. Endorse the Council's commitment to children and young people having influence over decisions and actions on services that affect them.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This report sets out the City of Wolverhampton Council commitment to the importance of effective participation of children and young people in the services that affect them.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child contains 52 standards that set out the Rights of a Child. Most countries including the United Kingdom have signed up to the convention. Many countries use the standards wholly or in part to promote children and young people's involvement. The standards of most relevance to the participation of service users are:

Article 12: Children and young people have the right to say what they think should happen, when adults are making decisions that affect them, and to have their opinions taken into account.

Article 13: Children and young people have the right to get and to share information, as long as the information is not damaging to them or others.

Article 17: Children and young people have the right to receive, seek and give information.

Article 23: Disabled children and young people have the right to active participation in their community.

Article 2: Requires all of the rights in the convention on the Rights of the Child to be implemented for every child, without discrimination.

- 2.2 The City of Wolverhampton Council has a long and impressive history of effective participation of children and young people with the Youth Council (Youth Service) and Children in Care Council (Looked After Children). Both the forums and children and young people's participation is supported by 1.5 Participation Officers based in the COPE team.

- 2.3 The Participation Strategy was developed and designed using workshops with members of the Children in Care Council and the Youth Council during 2015/16. These workshops focused on what good participation means to young people and how they wanted to be engaged in service development and decisions.

- 2.4 The participation workshop group also explored the different forums for young people and how they could share the outcomes of consultation with young people ie: School Councils and vulnerable young peoples' groups. These links have now been strengthened with representation from school councils, Be Safe and voluntary groups sitting on the Youth Council from November 2015.

3.0 Progress, options, discussion, etc.

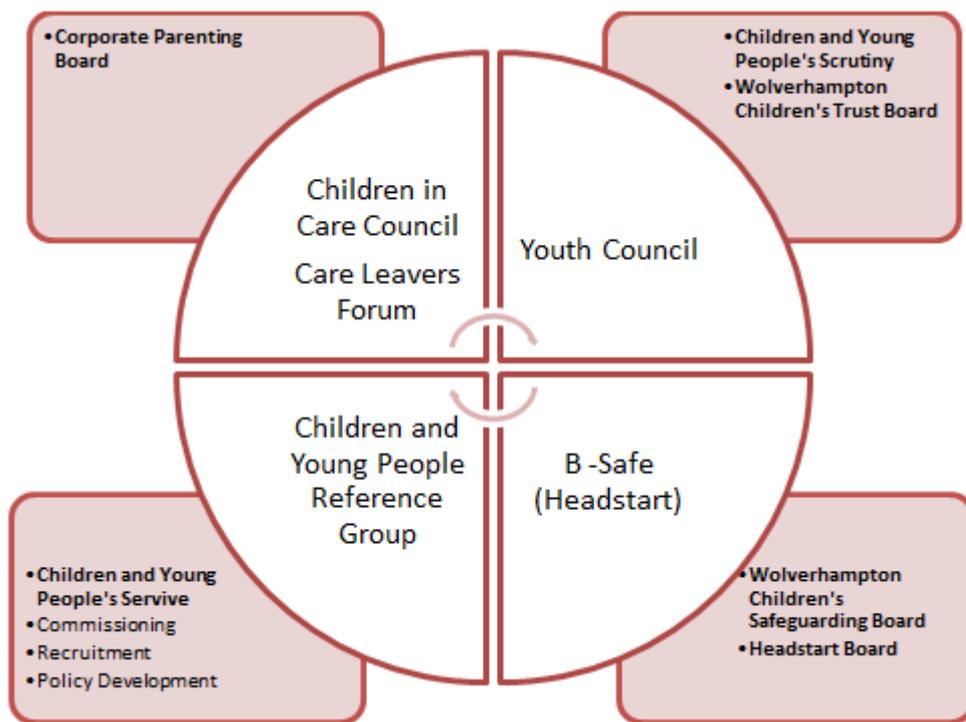
- 3.1 The Participation Strategy sets out clear standards of participation for children and young people to ensure that it is not tokenistic and remains relevant.

These standards are:

- The right to participate or not. If they choose to participate, they have the right to understand their responsibilities.

- Participation should be delivered within Wolverhampton's equality and diversity duty.
- There should be clear evidence of commitment to participation from members of the Children and Young People's Trust Board, Safeguarding Children Board, Council Leaders, City of Wolverhampton Council staff and other relevant organisations.
- Services should agree to the Hear by Right quality standards and codes of conduct for working with children and young people. For example: set out how confidentially and child protection issues will be handled.
- Participation should be embedded in strategic planning, delivery, commissioning, communication, business improvement activities, and recruitment.
- Opportunities and support should be provided so all staff and volunteers can develop the skills and attitudes to work effectively with children and young people.
- Children and young people's involvement should be valued. They should be treated honestly. This means that their expectations are managed and they are helped to understand any practical, legal or political boundaries of their involvement.
- Children and young people's contributions (appropriate to their age and maturity), should be taken seriously and acted upon. There should be regular feedback from children and young people to confirm that this happens.
- Feedback to children and young people on the impact of their involvement should be timely and clear.
- Children and young people should have equal opportunity to get involved. They should not be discriminated against, or prevented from participating effectively, on grounds of race, religion, culture, sexuality, disability, age, ethnic origin, language, where they live, or the location of services.
- Services should proactively target those facing the greatest barriers to getting involved. For example, younger children, children and young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, those living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, children missing school, young people in the youth justice system, refugees, traveller children, disabled and other children with special needs. Services should make sure that children are aware of opportunities to have their say, and encourage them to use them.
- Children and young people are encouraged and supported to develop skills that enable them to contribute effectively, and to realise the benefits of doing so.
- Relevant information should be made available to children and young people. It should be at the right time, in the right format, no jargon, culturally appropriate and accessible. Policies and standards for participation should be provided, evaluated and continuously improved.
- Services should say from the beginning how they will know if they are doing a good job of listening to children and young people.
- Children and young people should be involved in reviewing lessons learned.
- The participation strategy should be considered in partnership contracts and service level agreements with providers, whenever possible.

3.2 Each of the participation groups and forums has direct lines of governance as outlined in the diagram below. This ensures that members and officers are able to support children and young people in having their opinions heard at a corporate and strategic level.



3.3 Once agreement has been granted in adopting the principles laid down in the Participation Strategy, information leaflets will be disseminated to internal and external partners for colleagues to be clear of their role in ensuring the voice of children and young people is represented in their service developments.

3.4 In addition, there will be a programme of awareness raising for children and young people in the understanding of their role, and the opportunities available to them in engaging in formal participation and consultative groups; through schools, community groups, the voluntary sector and specialist service provisions.

4.0 Financial implications

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any costs associated with the implementation of the Strategy will be funded from existing budgets.
[AS/08062016/P]

5.0 Legal implications

5.1 There are no specific legal implications.
[TS/06072016/P]

6.0 Equalities implications

6.1 An equalities analysis is being undertaken, in partnership with the Equalities and Diversities Team. As the work that underpins this strategy is to overcome any inequality,

the analysis is aspirational and will need to be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.

7.0 Environmental implications

7.1 There are no environmental implications

8.0 Human resources implications

8.1 There are no human resource implications

9.0 Corporate landlord implications

9.1 There are no corporate landlord implications

10.0 Schedule of background papers

10.1 Children and Young Peoples Participation Strategy 2016 -2019